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Afghanistan Situation Report

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14 May 1985

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

CONTENTS

INSURGENTS ATTACK AIRFIELDS [REDACTED]

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Insurgents attacked four airfields in early May, despite Soviet and Afghan attempts to improve security. [REDACTED]

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PROMOTIONS FAVOR PARCHAMIS [REDACTED]

1

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Recent regime military promotions heavily favored officers who belonged either to the Parchami faction of the PDPA or KHAD. [REDACTED]

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TRANSPORTATION COSTS INCREASING [REDACTED]

3

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The cost of transporting goods from Pakistan to Afghanistan is increasing because of the escalating cost of pack animals. [REDACTED]

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HIGH-LEVEL PERSONNEL CHANGES PENDING? [REDACTED]

3

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Babrak Karmal's departure for Moscow, probably including medical treatment, and the replacement of an Afghan Politburo member have triggered rumors of more personnel changes in the Afghan Government. [REDACTED]

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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PERSPECTIVE

AFGHANISTAN IN APRIL

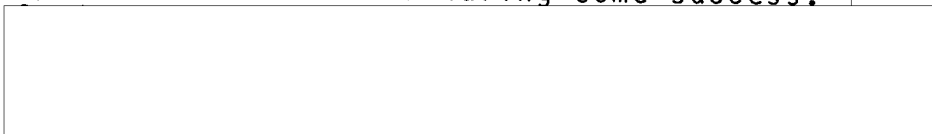


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Insurgent and Soviet activity picked up during April with both sides having some success.

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INSURGENTS ATTACK AIRFIELDS

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] US Embassy sources report that insurgents bombed Jalalabad airport on 2 May during the arrival of delegates returning to the city from the regime's Loya Jirga. A week earlier, guerrillas attempted to rocket the airfield but hit a nearby Soviet encampment, causing some 25 casualties, according to Embassy sources. [REDACTED]

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Comment: The recent insurgent attacks occurred despite renewed Soviet attempts to improve security around airfields. Improvements in resistance weapons holdings--such as incendiary shells and rockets with a greater range than those available early in the war--are enabling the insurgents to adapt their tactics to counter improved Soviet defenses and increased Soviet patrols around airfields. [REDACTED]

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PROMOTIONS FAVOR PARCHAMIS

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Members of Babrak Karmal's Parchami faction of the PDPA dominated promotions announced during the seventh anniversary of the 1978 coup. Two prominent Khalqis, Interior Minister Gulabzoi and Defense Minister Nazar Mohammad, were promoted to the rank of major general, but six of the seven others raised to that rank are Parchamis. Of the 19 officers promoted to brigadier general, a significant majority belong to the Parchami faction, and more than half are members of the KHAD, the Afghan Government intelligence service. [REDACTED]

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Comment: The Parchamis have been unable to alter the factional balance among the military officers, which reportedly still favors the Khalqis. The regime probably is trying to compensate for this by increasing the influence of KHAD, dominated by the Parchamis, in the military. The promotions of Gulabzoi--the unofficial head of the Khalqi faction--and Nazar Mohammad suggests that the regime recognizes the need, or was urged by the Soviets, not to appear too one-sided in the promotions. [REDACTED]

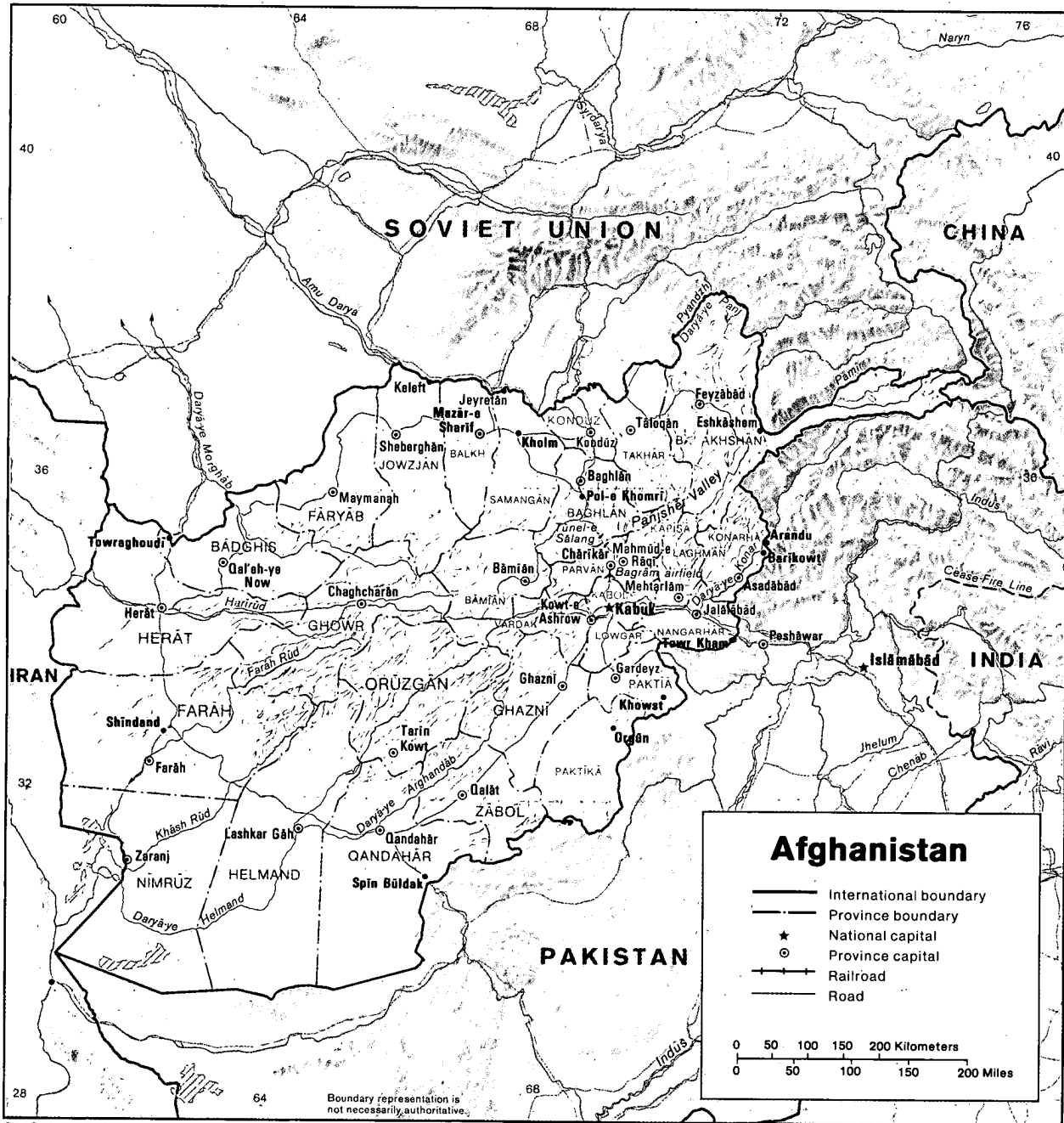
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TRANSPORTATION COSTS INCREASING [REDACTED]

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A representative of Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) recently told a US official that it cost \$30,000 to transport a ton of supplies to Badakshan Province from Pakistan last fall. MSF purchased 25 mules for the trip at a cost of about \$1,000 each, and ten died before reaching the destination. According to MSF, transportation costs will increase again this year because mules are now selling for \$2,500 each. [REDACTED]

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Comment: Shipping goods into Afghanistan has been expensive. The cost of pack animals increased by 25 percent from 1983 to 1984 [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Late fall and winter trips also are more expensive because fodder for pack animals is difficult to get. The MSF projection for an increase in costs this year seems high; US officials put the current cost of mules in Peshawar at between \$800 and \$1,100. [REDACTED]

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HIGH-LEVEL PERSONNEL CHANGES PENDING? [REDACTED]

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The departure of Babrak Karmal for Moscow and Kabul's naming of a respected nonparty politician, Abdul Hatif, as Chairman of the National Fatherland Front, replacing Politburo member Ziray, has triggered rumors of other high-level personnel changes. The Soviet Ambassador to Kabul, who normally tries to dampen these rumors, noted in a recent conversation with the US Charge that Babrak Karmal is a "sick man" and commented positively on the energy and intelligence of Prime Minister Keshtmand. The ambassador also noted that Politburo member Nur Ahmad Nur, who reportedly was exiled to Moscow for his role in fueling party factionalism, will be coming back to Kabul to assume an important position. [REDACTED]

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Comment: In recent months Moscow's frustration over the Afghan regime's inability to play a more effective role in the fighting and win more popular support has prompted a change of defense ministers and head of the National Fatherland Front, and it is possible that other high-level personnel changes are pending. The Soviets probably are still disinclined, however, to affect changes at the very top, because they see no

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[REDACTED]

suitable alternative to Babrak. Babrak has a health problem that required treatment in the USSR or East Europe about every six months until 1984, but he has gone for more than a year without having to travel abroad for medical treatment. [REDACTED]

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UPCOMING EVENTS

16 May Babrak Karmal departs Moscow for Poland on an official visit. [REDACTED]

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21 May Ramadan begins. [REDACTED]

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30 May Anniversary of Afghanistan's independence from Great Britain, achieved in 1919. [REDACTED]

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20 June Ramadan ends. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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TOP SECRET**PERSPECTIVE****AFGHANISTAN IN APRIL**25X1
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The insurgents and the Soviets increased the scope of fighting in April with both achieving some success, and the Soviets continued preparations for late spring and summer offensives. The insurgents maintained sieges of outposts along the Afghan-Pakistani border and started operations in a new area of southern Afghanistan.

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The Eastern Provinces

This month insurgents again maintained heavy pressure on Afghan Government outposts near the Pakistani border. Konar Valley insurgents continued to harass Afghan Army garrisons in the Valley.

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The insurgents also inflicted heavy casualties on Afghan Government forces in Nangarhar Province and continued to besiege most of the outposts in Paktia Province from Khowst in the south to Ali Kheyl in the north.

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The Kabul Area

Soviet and Afghan forces conducted large operations west of Kabul in the Paghman and Kowt-e Ashrow areas but with high costs as the insurgents offered strong

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[REDACTED]

resistance. Guerrilla forces received warnings of Soviet plans for operations near Kabul and were prepared for the attacks. Heavy fighting around Paghman reportedly resulted in high casualties among Soviet and Afghan forces and civilians. Insurgents also rocketed Kabul for the first time in four months but caused little damage. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Outlook

Soviet efforts probably will focus on the border regions in attempts to stem the flow of arms from Pakistan and Iran. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the Soviets believe in many instances that small unit operations are more effective than large-scale operations. The Soviets are relying increasingly on heliborne operations to catch the guerrillas off guard. Though the Soviets will gain some victories, as they reported in Konduz in April, deficiencies in their own intelligence collection efforts, inability to respond to intelligence when they do collect it, and insurgent counterintelligence networks prevent them from locating and engaging the guerrillas in large enough numbers to make a significant impact on the insurgency. [REDACTED]

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